

**Testimony for the Appropriations Committee
Funding for the Connecticut Mental Health Center
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Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Members of the Committee,
I am writing testimony for the Appropriations Committee IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING for the Connecticut Mental Health Center.

I am currently a third-year psychiatry resident at Yale University, working full time this year at the Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC) as an outpatient psychiatrist. In this role, I see patients in the outpatient clinic, in our acute services department, and participate in resident and medical student education. I am writing because through my intimate experience working at CMHC, I can foresee a number of highly alarming results of the proposed budget cuts of \$947,000, a number that represents a very significant proportion of the CMHC budget:

First and foremost, **I am concerned about how this will negatively impact our ability to provide care to a population in desperate need of mental health and social services.** As a mental health provider at CMHC, I have encountered innumerable situations where I thought, “if not for CMHC, this patient would never receive mental health services.” CMHC proudly serves as a safety net hospital for some of the least well off people in our state, as well as specific groups of disadvantaged and marginalized people (the uninsured, Hispanics, substance users, people with criminal justice histories). There are no other treatment options for many of our clients, especially as many other facilities serving Medicaid clients are also already overburdened and have long waiting lists.

We provide quality services with integrity, but our ability to serve our clients is already limited by staff shortages and lack of funding. As a member of the outpatient clinic, I know that **our teams are already understaffed and clinicians are already overburdened with very high case loads of patients.** This has especially been the case since the closing of the West Haven mental health clinic. This shortage poses significant challenges in the time we are able to spend with clients and working on their cases, which in turn jeopardizes their recovery and ability to be healthy and productive members of our society. **It is imperative that we not be short-sighted and recognize that budget cuts to CMHC now are likely to bring higher social and economic costs to our state in the long run,** via increased hospitalizations, loss of potential incomes, and early death resulting from untreated mental illness and addictions (we are currently in the midst of a lethal opioid epidemic).

Second, and related to my first concern, is that the proposed **budget cuts stand to result in further cuts to our staffing, likely including resident training positions.** Previous budget cuts have already affected the number of outpatient and inpatient resident slots available at CMHC. **CMHC’s training mission allows the Yale psychiatry residency to be a training ground for future leaders of public psychiatry in Connecticut and beyond.** One major motivator for me to train in psychiatry at Yale was the opportunity to work at CMHC, which I perceived as a unique and cutting edge center for excellence in public mental health. **Ongoing budget cuts risk undermining the ability for further residents to train at CMHC as well as the quality of the experience.** This is problematic as the Yale Psychiatry trainees at CMHC have helped to address a severe statewide shortage in psychiatrists working in the DMHAS system. This is also likely to result in fewer residents, especially those of top caliber with multiple potential job opportunities, desiring to enter the public sector here in CT upon

graduation.

Therefore, I strongly advocate for Connecticut to continue supporting its constituents when they are mentally unwell and have nowhere else to turn to but our state facilities. Cutting the CMHC budget just doesn't make good fiscal or moral sense!